

# GWOPA

## STRATEGY

2020-2025



Supporting the implementation of



IMPLEMENTING  
THE NEW  
URBAN AGENDA

**GWOPA Strategy 2020-2025** | Draft - Pending Final Approval

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(GWOPA) / United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat)

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# **GWOPA STRATEGY** 2020-2025





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## Foreword

The world is experiencing an unprecedented tide of urbanization that is bringing with it tremendous challenges and opportunities. Another 2.5 billion people will join cities and towns before 2050. How these human settlements are built and managed will determine much about the quality of life on this planet.

To build *inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities* – the kind aspired to in Sustainable Development Goal 11 – universal access to clean water and safe sanitation services are indispensable. Indeed, with water and sanitation as prerequisites for achieving virtually every SDG at the local level, ensuring strong local capacity to deliver these services is a top priority.

When former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan requested UN-Habitat to establish GWOPA, he drew on three simple observations of his Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB): i) public water and sanitation operators are enormously important, ii) they are struggling to meet global development targets, and iii) there is huge untapped potential for them to help one another.

Ten years on, Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) are widespread and working well. Hundreds of utilities, across all continents, are marking improvements thanks to these not-for-profit peer partnerships. New water associations, governments, United Nations agencies and NGOs continue to adopt the approach, establishing new WOP programmes and platforms, often backed by development banks and donors who recognize that WOPs not only build capacity to improve performance, but facilitate much-needed investments. Guided by experience, WOPs today are more effective, leading to greater impact and rising credibility. What's more, as utilities in developing regions get stronger, more of them are sharing their knowledge in turn, perpetuating this virtuous cycle of learning, improving and sharing.

As global challenges like climate change negatively affect water infrastructure and services, WOPs stand out more than ever as a high-value approach, worthy of continued scale up. Strong utilities hold the capacity and innovations their peers need – from introducing circular approaches that optimize resource efficiency and minimize pollution, to bridging sustainable finances and inclusive access for all, to building resilience and ensuring good and safe jobs for local people – and many are eager to share them on a solidarity basis. WOPs offer an opportunity to accelerate the adoption of sustainable solutions for local water services providers and the billions of people they serve worldwide.

GWOPA's new 2020-2025 strategy has been drawn from the inputs of its wide network of member organizations, evaluations of its previous strategy, the concurrent UN-Habitat strategy development process, and its many years of experience. It situates WOPs squarely as a tool for localizing the SDGs, and positions UN-Habitat's GWOPA Secretariat as the global convener, catalyzer, advocate and knowledge broker for WOPs within its growing global alliance.

It's my pleasure to encourage all partners to join forces in supporting the implementation of this strategy.

**Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif**  
**Executive Director of UN-Habitat**



## Executive Summary

While there has been progress in extending access to water and sanitation services in recent decades, 2.1 billion people still cannot count on contamination-free water, available on premises whenever they need it, and 4.5 billion still lack sanitation systems that protect them from disease.

Water quality is declining, and water scarcity now affects 40% of the global population. The freshwater ecosystems that sustain water services are under threat, and consumption patterns are aggravating disparities and the potential for conflict around water. From peace to prosperity, the “world we want,” will only be possible if we achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6, the SDG Water Goal. Local water and sanitation service providers have a tremendous role to play in reaching these essential global water and sanitation targets yet many face enormous challenges to supply existing and fast-growing future populations and to meet national and global goals.

Water Operators’ Partnerships (WOPs) are peer support exchanges between two or more water operators, carried out on a not-for-profit basis, with the objective of strengthening their capacity,

enhancing their performance and enabling them to provide a better service to more people. WOPs have a proven track-record and can be highly cost-effective.

Formally founded by UN-Habitat in January 2009, upon the request of the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the Global Water Operators’ Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) is an international network created to support water operators through WOPs. GWOPA has documented case studies, analysed success factors, developed guidance material, and developed a strong alliance of water operators, water associations, development partners, labour and civil society bodies, International Financial Institutions and the private sector. GWOPA has played the chief role in promoting and coordinating WOPs around the world.

An evaluation of the past strategy 2013-2017 confirmed that WOPs are effective and GWOPA is instrumental in pushing their agenda. The experience of implementing GWOPA’s 2013-2017 strategy offered rich lessons for the upcoming strategy period that have been fully integrated in this new Strategy.

### **Vision and Mission**

GWOPA’s vision is that water and sanitation service providers, connected in a solidarity-based network, are sharing and helping one another improve services for all, to achieve local and global objectives.

GWOPA’s mission is to work as an effective global alliance to inspire, mobilize support for, catalyze, guide, monitor and enable Water Operators Partnerships that improve lives.

## Strategic objectives

GWOPA's strategy 2019-2023 has two strategic objectives:

- WOPs are scaled up
- WOPs are contributing to water and sanitation service providers' improved capacity and performance, and local realization of the SDGs, to the benefit of all, particularly the poor.

The strategic objectives will be accomplished by addressing the following outcome areas:

## Intermediate Objectives

### 1. WOPs are well known, supported, adopted and adequately funded

Dedicated effort will continue to raise consciousness about the challenges facing water utilities and the opportunities for addressing them through WOPs. The WOPs practice will become better known and trusted by the relevant technical, financial and political actors, as a cost-effective mechanism for achieving concrete local objectives, such as improving services for customers and

financial sustainability, while contributing to the aspirational visions embodied by the Declaration on the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation and the Sustainable Development Goals.

### Communications

GWOPA's communications efforts will aim to increase awareness and appreciation of WOPs to a range of audiences, highlighting their contribution to capacity development, performance improvement and sustainable development. Messages will emphasise the demonstrated benefits of WOPs to people and institutions, focusing on their cost-effectiveness, leverage effects, and contribution to broad and lasting change. Advantages for mentor utilities and their communities, such as pride, solidarity and staff development, need also to be shared through stories and interviews. Communications activities will also aim to strengthen GWOPA's reputation as an open global water solidarity network comprised of partners engaged in helping water and sanitation utilities help one another.

### Advocacy

GWOPA will lobby to improve the context for utilities and solidarity-based peer-support partnerships by advocating for WOP- and utility-friendly positions within international, national and local policies, laws and frameworks. Governments, financiers and decision-makers will be encouraged to adopt or implement frameworks, policies and strategies that facilitate or enhance the WOP practice.

### Mobilizing WOP finance

GWOPA will work to expand the pool of funds available for the WOPs practice worldwide. GWOPA will continue building recognition for WOPs as a cost-effective model for strengthening utility capacity and performance. GWOPA will continue to document and demonstrate WOPs' value for money, considering revenue gains but also long-term sustainability benefits. GWOPA will diversify and engage with existing WOP donors and development banks to strengthen their commitment to funding WOPs as a systematic component of their development cooperation programmes and to encourage WOPs of greater duration, connected with investment, and which follow global good practice.

## **2. WOP actors make use of the knowledge products and services produced or co-produced by GWOPA**

### WOPs documentation and research

GWOPA will continue to collaborate in the production of research and case studies about Water Operators' Partnerships, applying a refined Analytical Framework for this purpose. GWOPA will also undertake studies on WOP partnership approaches, as well as surveys of the financial, legal and political environment for utilities and WOPs.

### WOPs monitoring

GWOPA will lead the global monitoring, documentation and analysis of the WOPs practice. GWOPA will continue to develop its global WOP Profile database to track information about where and how WOPs are happening, and will roll out its new WOP Results planning, monitoring and reporting methodology at the WOP project level to support the collection of more comprehensive and robust information about results that enables better visibility of capacity results among others.

### Knowledge and tools for effective WOPs

GWOPA will continue to produce and disseminate WOP guidance based on WOPs principles and good practice drawn from documented cases. Existing guidelines and tools to facilitate the establishment, implementation and monitoring of effective and inclusive partnerships will be expanded and widely shared in WOP initiatives, in different formats and languages. GWOPA will also develop guidelines to help operators to navigate global commitments, including implementation modalities for achieving the SDGs or realizing the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation

## **3. GWOPA is a strong and fruitful water solidarity network.**

GWOPA will carry out its mission as a strong network of actively engaged and coordinated members, partners and platforms, with a robust governance framework. As GWOPA moves away from direct WOP implementation, it will raise its status as a convener, coordinator and catalyser for the WOPs' practice.

### Growing membership

GWOPA will work with its regional and national platforms to consolidate and further expand the global membership of organizations who can participate in, benefit from, or contribute to WOPs.

Efforts will focus on engaging public utilities, of all sizes, in both urban and rural areas and from all regions, to share knowledge and engage in WOPs as mentors and mentees. For reach and perspective, GWOPA will also continue to foster geographical and sector diversity within its membership.

### Leveraging partnerships

The GWOPA Secretariat will make the most of its Alliance approach by collaborating with partner organizations to achieve its strategic objectives. It will seek expertise within its network, or reach out to relevant new organizations to bring in knowledge and assets it may lack.



## WOP platforms and programmes

The global network of national and regional platforms, as well as the emerging number of independent WOP programmes, are the operational arm of the GWOPA Strategy. Close, mutually beneficial and active collaboration with these various platforms and programmes underlies GWOPA's strategic approach.

## Thematic Hubs

Focusing on a select number of key areas at the utility-sustainability nexus where utilities as a whole urgently need to accelerate progress, GWOPA will bring together expert partners and WOPs practitioners within its network to rally relevant knowledge, financing and advocacy efforts to support operators in making more rapid improvements in these areas.

## Supporting Outcome

### 4. GWOPA is efficiently and effectively managed and governed

#### Governance

GWOPA's Governance structure and management is defined by the GWOPA Charter, established at its first Steering Committee in 2009 to set the regulatory framework for GWOPA governance and operations. Updated once in 2013, the Charter will undergo another participatory review and amendment early in the new 2020-2025 strategy period, with an eye to fine-tune for effectiveness, while retaining its foundational principles.

#### General Assembly

GWOPA *Members* participate in GWOPA's General Assemblies and are eligible to run and vote in International Steering Committee elections. Membership in the Alliance is open to all interested water and sanitation stakeholder organizations and obtained by committing to adhere to GWOPA's principles and code-of-conduct in the implementation of partnership activities.

GWOPA *Partners* are the substantive partners formally engaged with the GWOPA Secretariat in implementing activities. In the new strategy period, criteria and processes for membership and partnership will be streamlined and better communicated to expand membership and increase the quality and quantity of its substantive partnerships.

GWOPA's *International Steering Committee* (ISC) reviews reports and workplans and provides advice and overall strategic guidance to GWOPA. GWOPA's current ISC is comprised of a fixed number of representatives from each stakeholder category: public water operators or associations representing different regions, development partners, civil society organizations, labour unions and private operators. The composition of the Steering Committee reflects the geographical and institutional diversity of the Alliance as established in GWOPA's charter and is chaired by the *UN-Habitat Executive Director*.

#### Secretariat

The GWOPA Secretariat is institutionally anchored within UN-Habitat. The Secretariat will be responsible for implementing the

GWOPA Strategy in collaboration with Alliance Partners and Members and in consultation with UN-Habitat and the International Steering Committee. The Secretariat is currently based in Barcelona, following a 2013 agreement with the Government of Spain and the City of Barcelona. The Secretariat Team will be led by a Programme Manager, with three to four professional staff and one administrative staff member. During the strategy implementation period, the Secretariat will count on the additional support of UN-Habitat staff in Headquarters, consultants, Junior Professional Officers and interns, as well as the ad-hoc support of UN volunteers. The tasks of the core staff include normative work for UN-Habitat as well as the operational implementation of activities under the focus areas identified in this strategy.

### Resources

Funding for the implementation of the strategy will be secured through a combination of a hosting agreement and acquired projects. The contribution of the Host Country will ensure the stability of the programme and allow it to maintain its global role as an independent broker and promoter of WOPs while projects acquired will diversify Secretariat financing and allow a more intensive implementation of the Strategy. During the 2020-2025 period, GWOPA will work to mobilize additional multilateral and bilateral donors by making use of Trust Fund mechanisms within UN-Habitat.



## Background

While there has been progress in extending access to water and sanitation services in recent decades, 2.1 billion people still cannot count on contamination-free water, available on premises whenever they need it, and 4.5 billion still lack sanitation systems that protect them from disease.<sup>1</sup> Water quality is declining and water scarcity now affects 40% of the global population. The freshwater ecosystems that sustain water services are under threat, and consumption patterns are aggravating disparities and the potential for conflict around water.

The “world we want”<sup>2</sup> will only be possible if we achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6, the SDG Water Goal. For the many people that lack access, ensuring the “availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”<sup>3</sup> is an urgent priority. But it is also a requirement for achieving all of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, from peace to prosperity.

Local water and sanitation service providers have a tremendous role to play in reaching these essential global water and sanitation targets. From public utilities that supply water and sewerage services to millions of customers in capital cities, to small units in local governments in rural areas or slums, water operators provide fundamental services that enable progress in virtually all aspects of sustainable development.

1. The UN definition for ‘safely managed sanitation’.
2. The global UN campaign to gather inputs towards the formulation of Agenda 2030.
3. The wording of SDG 6.





## Water Utilities in a Global Perspective

Many utilities are still unfamiliar with the Sustainable Development Goals, however they are key to their achievement. Effective local water and sanitation services underlie the Agenda 2030 vision for people, planet, prosperity and peace.

## People

SDGs addressing poverty (SDG1), hunger (SDG2), health (SDG3), education (SDG4) and gender equality (SDG5).

Clean water and safe sanitation are widely recognised human rights. Strong water utilities ensure that this basic right is met by everyone, regardless of origin, age, gender, ability, income or geography. Through treatment, testing and delivery, utilities save lives by making sure drinking water is free from contamination. Service providers' collection, transport and treatment of faecal matter dramatically reduce the risk of water-borne disease and malnutrition. Improved access to safe water and sanitation supports gender equity since women and girls carry the heaviest burden of responsibilities around water collection and care-giving. Safe and adapted toilets and clean water at home and schools help ensure that girls and boys, including those with disability, can continue getting an education.

## Planet

SDGs addressing responsible consumption (SDG12), climate change (SDG13), and aquatic (SDG14) and land (SDG15) ecosystems.

Freshwater, the lifeblood of nature, is under threat. Population growth, the overconsumption of water resources, unmitigated pollution, and poor land planning are compounding with climate change to increase water scarcity. Effective water utilities can invest in watersheds to protect the land and aquatic ecosystems that source water for humans and other species. Utilities can increase water-use efficiency and minimize waste to improve water quality. Through smarter leak and pressure management, service providers can greatly reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, and use circular management schemes to transform 'waste' into assets.

## Prosperity

SDGs addressing energy (SDG7), work (SDG8), infrastructure (SDG9), reducing inequality (SDG10) and urbanisation (SDG11).

From girls who fetch water in rural areas to CEOs who fear that shortages will impact profitability, water is wealth. Both a source of, and a means to, affluence, water and its equitable repartition is central to the Agenda 2030 vision for shared prosperity. The water provided by operators is a fundamental input to virtually all economic and social life. Safely-managed and accountable water and sanitation systems save countless time and energy and are a boon in particular to poor people who can then put scarce resources to more fruitful purposes. Progressively, well-managed utilities can pursue financial sustainability at the same time as ensuring inclusive cities and communities where no one is left behind in the provision of services.

## Peace

SDG 16 for peace, justice and strong institutions

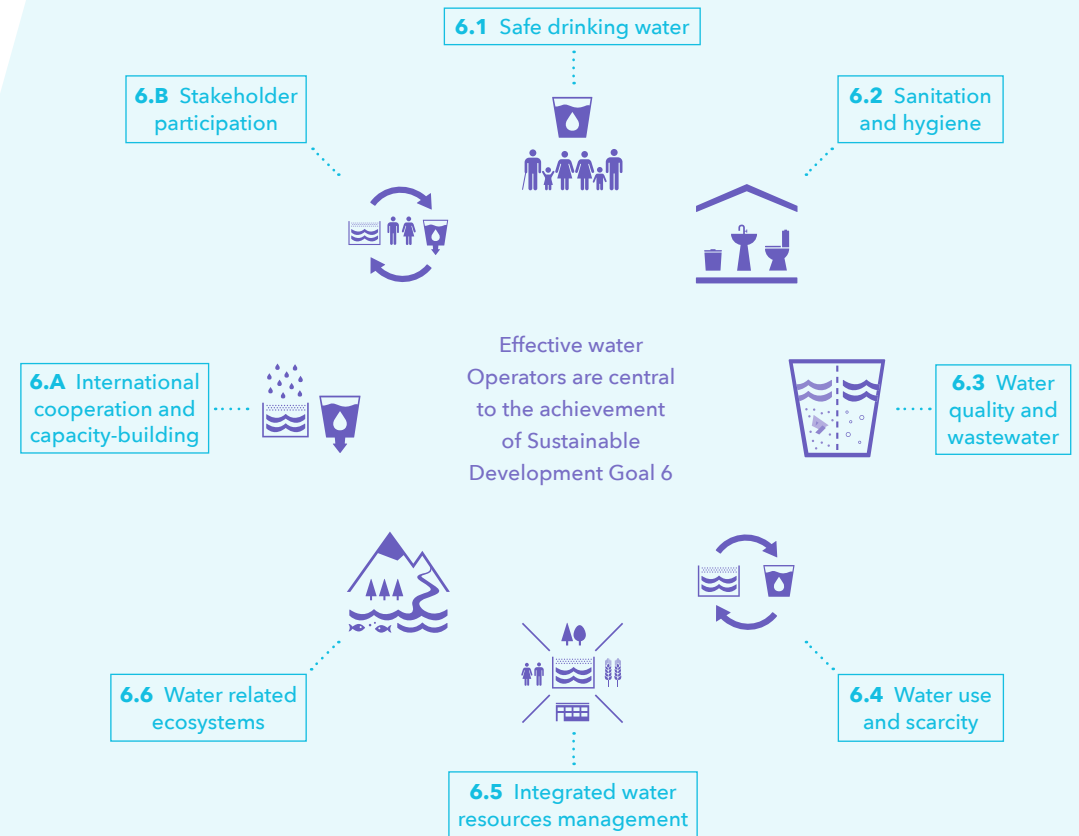
Effective water services are crucial in conflict prevention and peace-building. Nothing can ignite tensions more than injustices around resources and basic services. Where man-made or natural disaster has damaged water supply and sanitation infrastructure, access to water and sanitation generally deteriorates. By ensuring resilient and inclusive water and sanitation services, utilities can be agents for peace and stability in tense or disaster-struck regions and fragile cities. Reliable water and sanitation service providers who operate according to the principles of transparency, accountability and participation, can be a balm to conflict, helping relieve friction or absorb shocks. Where conflict has broken out, strong service providers can ensure that affected peoples meet with services that assure their needs, dignity and human rights. In reconstruction, good water and sanitation services can be a central element in "building back better" communities.



# Water Operators' Challenges

In many cities of the world, water utilities' services are characterized by poor quality water, frequent cuts, and very limited coverage within the urban area. High water losses, poorly designed tariffs and poor billing and collection systems contribute to financial problems that worsen infrastructure and services and further exclude those without access. Sanitation services and wastewater treatment are generally inadequate or inexistent, and many utilities rely on diminishing sources of water. Compounded by antiquated and wasteful linear approaches to urban water management, poor governance and weak management, financial and operational approaches, many service providers are unable to confront the widening scope of social and environmental challenges before them.

With an estimated 1.7 trillion USD in funding needed to meet only SDG 6.1 and 6.2 by 2030, building the institutional capacity to effectively manage these investments for sustainable public benefit is critical.



The complementary targets of SDG6 reflect the recognition that equitable access to water (SDG 6.1) and sanitation (SDG 6.2) services are only sustainable when water is of good quality (SDG 6.3), efficiently used (SDG 6.4), and managed in an integrated manner (SDG 6.5) that protects ecosystems (SDG 6.6). **Water and Sanitation service providers play a significant role in reaching all of the SDG 6 targets.**





## Water Operators' Partnerships

Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) are peer-support partnerships between water and sanitation service providers. WOPs work by harnessing the skills, knowledge and goodwill within a strong utility to build the capacity and improve the performance of another utility that needs assistance or guidance.

WOPs make use of the fact that while many local water and sanitation service providers are struggling, others have great performance and are willing to support others in their improvement process on a not-for-profit basis. Through mentorship, WOPs progressively strengthen and empower beneficiary utilities on management, financial and technical levels to implement operational and organizational changes that lead to better and more sustainable services.

Compared with other efforts to enhance operator performance, WOPs stand out in their emphasis on strengthening local capacity for sustainable improvements. In WOPs, dedicated capacity development activities introduce knowledge, skills and new processes, inducing operational changes that, once having taken root, result in improved performance within the mentee utility. A key strength of WOPs is that, rather than substituting capacity, they focus on helping local utility staff to make lasting improvements that can continue well beyond the life of the partnership.

### WOPs Distinguishing Features

- They focus on building the capacity of resident water operator staff, rather than 'doing it for them.' This way the benefits last.
- They are peer partnerships, meaning that the support comes from professional counterparts with hands-on experience grappling with day to day utility challenges.
- WOPs are carried out on a not-for-profit basis and are not to be used for commercial purposes.



Utilities may take up WOPs to support a range of objectives: increasing efficiency, introducing new functions such as pro-poor units or sanitation services, bettering environmental performance, facilitating access to finance, extending access to services, or rebuilding human resource capacity following a remunicipalization. A growing number of WOPs are long-term and comprehensive, supporting utilities to make sweeping improvements. WOPs are used in a range of settings: from urban to small towns, and from middle income countries to low income and fragile states, and should always be fit to the local needs and context.

WOPs are a frequent support to investment programmes, where they precede, accompany, or follow up on significant investments. The knowledge and approaches acquired through WOPs lead to efficiencies that improve financial performance and can facilitate access to finance for infrastructure extension and better service provision. Improved capacity increases the impact and sustainability of investments, making WOPs highly cost-effective.

Mentor and mentee utilities have complementary motivations for doing WOPs. While the mentee gains access to expert knowledge and skills to improve their working environment and performance, mentor utility staff are drawn by the idea of helping others, attracting quality professionals, or gaining experience and international exposure. The combined incentives of the utility partners drive the WOP, instead of profit motives.

## What are Water Operators?

GWOPA uses 'utility,' 'operator' and 'service provider' when referring to providers of public water and/or sanitation services, regardless of their size, whether they are urban or rural, or whether they are run by a government department, communities or a utility company. Following the Hashimoto Action Plan, the focus of support in WOPs are local and public service providers, given that "publicly owned and managed water operators provide more than 90% of the world's piped water and even small managerial improvements could yield major benefits" (Hashimoto, 2006).

## **WOPs' Role in an Outstanding Turnaround: Phnom Penh's experience**

After Cambodia's destructive war by the Khmer Rouge regime, the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority (PPWSA) embarked on a 15-year long improvement process that turned the water utility into one of the more successful in the region. The massive turnaround within PPWSA was made possible with significant international support in which WOPs played a big role. Japanese water operators from Kitakyusyu and Yokohama municipalities trained PPWSA employees in O&M, with support from JICA; two Australian utilities provided assistance under a Ausaid supported twinning arrangement and a long-term partnership was established with the City of Paris, which generated funds to subsidise the water needs of the poor.

PPWSA now leads training workshops for other water utilities, and many water utilities from across the region have participated. In a keynote address at the 1st Global WOPs Congress in 2011, Mr. Chan, the PPWA Director who was instrumental in the transformation, focused on the important role that WOPs had played, in helping them avoid 'reinventing the wheel.' Yet while mentors can provide model examples, he emphasized the need for beneficiary utilities to drive their own their improvement process. After all, he said, while other utilities can provide peer support, 'they cannot replace us.'





Changes in PWWA Key Performance Indicators		
1993	Indicators	2009
22	Staff / 1,000 connections	3.2
65,000	Production capacity, m3 / day	300,000
NA	Water quality	WHO
20%	Coverage area	90%
10 hours / day	Supply duration	24 hours / day
0.2 bar	Supply pressure	2.5 bar
26,881	Number of connections	191,092
72%	NRW	5.94%
48%	Collection ratio	99.9%
150%	Operation ratio	38.41%
NA	Return on revenue	26.62%
NA	Return on net asset	4.71%
NA	Current ration	2.55 times
NA	Debt service coverage	3.25 times
NA	Accounts receivable	24 days



# Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA)

GWOPA is the global mechanism established to scale up the practice of Water Operators' Partnerships. Recognizing the importance of strong utilities for sustainable development and the potential for peer-to-peer partnerships to play a much more significant role in helping countries meet the Millennium Development Goals for Water and sanitation, in its 2006 Hashimoto Action Plan, the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board (UNSGAB) on Water and Sanitation recommended the establishment of a mechanism to promote the approach globally. Upon the request of former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, UN-Habitat led the creation of this mechanism and formed its Secretariat. To encourage the involvement of all needed partners in its global mission, UN-Habitat set up the mechanism as an alliance, open to all relevant actors willing to contribute. Alliance membership is dominated by public water utilities from around the globe and also includes development partners, civil society organizations, labour unions and private water operators.

Since its foundation in January 2009, GWOPA has been working to strengthen the technical and management capacity of water and sanitation operators through not-for-profit peer support partnerships. Between 2009 and 2012, GWOPA expanded its global network, helped establish regional and national WOP platforms, engaged major donors and development banks from every region, facilitated the implementation of dozens of WOPs, documented and monitored global WOPs practice and developed WOP guidance material, contributing to a significant rise in global awareness and momentum for WOPs around the world.

## Boosting Effectiveness in WOPs: the BEWOP Project

One of most appreciated aspects of WOPs is their hands-on knowledge exchange between peer professionals. Yet delivering WOPs sometimes calls on skills, like in partnering or capacity development, that utility staff might not naturally have. Since 2013, GWOPA has been collaborating with world-renowned water institute, IHE-Delft – to offer knowledge, guidance and practical tools that make it easier for utilities to lead successful WOPs.

In its first phase, the BEWOP project produced case studies and thematic research on WOPs that was translated into practical guidance and tools in phase two. The guidance, training, games and other tools are of two main types:

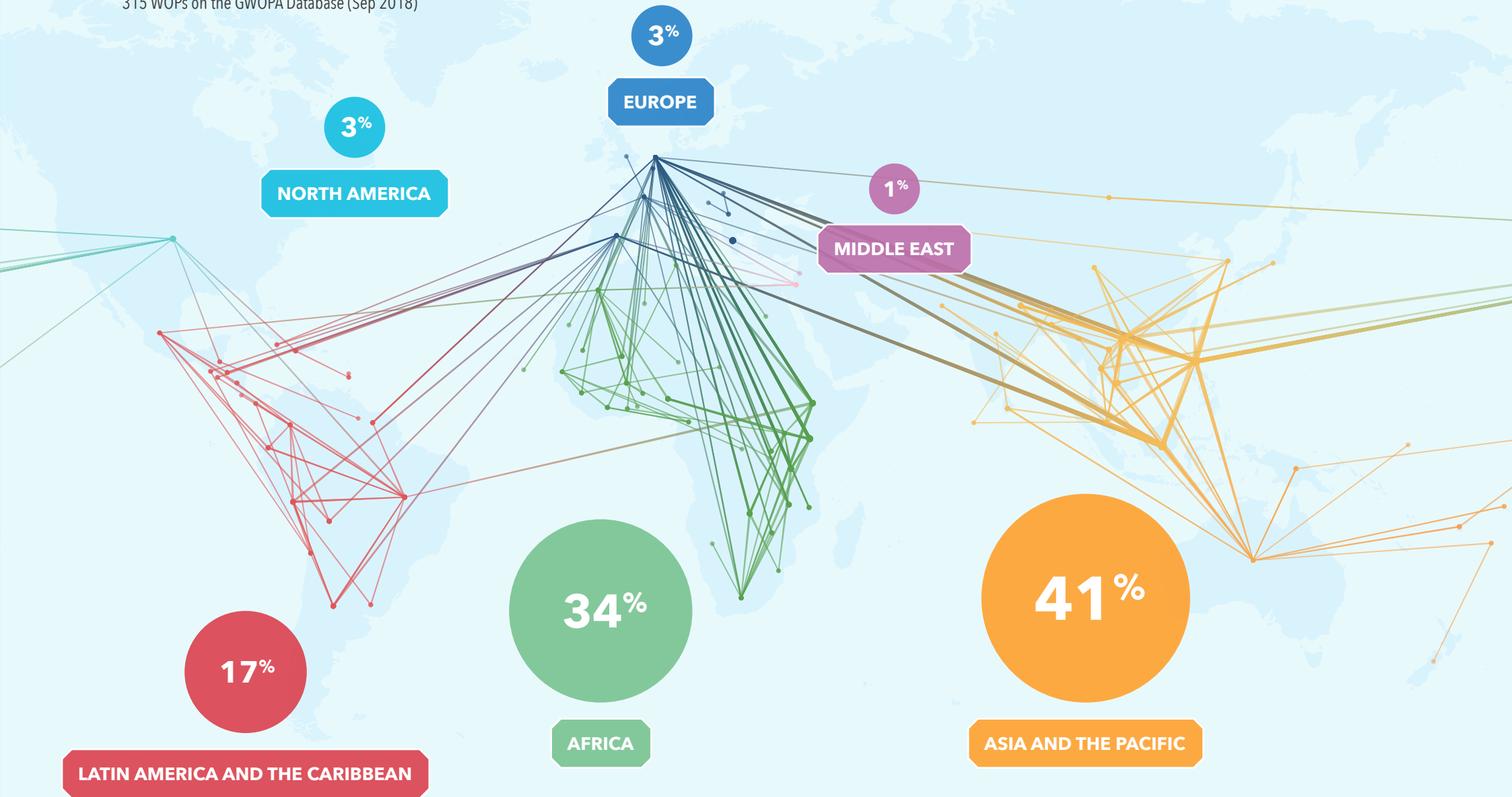
- Thematic, which focus on the technical, financial, managerial topics that are the nuts and bolts of utility business. These resources can be picked up and used within WOPs to help peer operators share knowledge on specific topics.
- Process, which support WOP implementation. This type of product offers guidelines, examples and tools to help operators, as well as WOP funders and facilitators, conduct their partnerships effectively.

In the new strategy period, BEWOP products are being developed with the input of operators who have contributed to their design, research, development or testing. All of the open-source products are being rolled out through GWOPA's network of regional and national WOPs platforms and in WOPs Programmes.



# Where are WOPs Happening?

315 WOPs on the GWOPA Database (Sep 2018)



**GWOPA's 2013-2017 Strategy Evaluation confirms the value of the WOPs approach:**



The WOPs mechanism has proven its effectiveness in mobilizing water and sanitation utilities - resulting in tangible improvements in the utilities' performance in terms of coverage and service quality. WOPs enable water and sanitation operators to improve service delivery with relatively limited funding and by applying a bottom-up process. The WOP concept contributes to achieving the SDGs and adds value by mobilizing local human resources and creating awareness on critical water and sanitation issues.





## GWOPA Principles and Code-of-Conduct

Following the original spirit of the UN Hashimoto Action Plan, GWOPA carries out its work according to the following principles:

- Inclusiveness
- Not-for-profit
- Supporting efforts worldwide
- Mutual benefit
- Transparency
- Building on the past
- Sustainable change
- A culture of solidarity

GWOPA's Code-of-conduct lays down the principles for partnerships undertaken as WOPs:

- Good Governance
- Integrity
- Social and Cultural Values
- Resolution of Conflicts
- Results-Orientation
- Cost sharing and Not-for-Profit
- Shared Incentives

For more on the origin of the code-of-conduct or principles and what they mean, see GWOPA's Charter: [gwopa.org/es/water-operators-partnerships/1825](https://gwopa.org/es/water-operators-partnerships/1825)

## WOPs and GWOPA in Global Frameworks



UNSGAB recognizes the potential to build the capacity of water utilities through the WOPs mechanism.  
Hashimoto Action Plan 1



UNSG requests UN-Habitat to set up a global centre to make WOPs more effective and systematic.



GWOPA is founded in Nairobi as an international multi-stakeholder alliance, working to scale up effective WOPs.  
GWOPA formally constituted

### MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS



UN Member states commit to reducing by half, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. (MDG 7.C).



UNGA calls upon states and international organizations to provide financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer to help, in particular, developing countries to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all.

The Human Right to Water and Sanitation



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replace MDGs framework. Goals call for the expansion of international cooperation and capacity building support that promotes equitable, efficient, safe, financially viable, resilient, participatory, innovative and integrated water and sanitation activities and programmes. (SDG, 3.3, 3.9, 6A, 6B, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 11.5, 12.4, 17.3, 17.6, 17.9).





EU Parliament encourages the promotion of public-public partnerships in water facilities in developing countries, in line with GWOPAs efforts.

The European Citizens' initiative Right2Water



While absent from the UNFCC COP 21 document that forged the global deal to combat global climate change, water is widely recognized as the means through which climate change makes its greatest impact. Country level commitments to the convention can be met in part by equipping utilities to adapt to deregulated hydrological regimes and heightened disaster risk, as well as to mitigate climate change by reducing their GHG gas emissions.

COP 21, Paris Agreement



The UN framework that endeavors to reduce the occurrence and negative impact of disaster effects globally. WOPs can contribute most to its targets d) to Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, and f) to substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



### NEW URBAN AGENDA

2036



The High Level Panel on Water commits itself to take action on a new approach to water management to help achieve 2030 SDGs. The panel acknowledges and supports the WOPs practice. (2).



The New Urban Agenda presents a shared vision for the future of sustainable cities and communities, where 'the rubber hits the ground' in realizing the SDGs. The Agenda commits "to equip public water and sanitation utilities with the capacity to implement sustainable water management systems" (NUA, paragraph 120) and recognizes the need for sustainable and inclusive water and sanitation services in its vision of cities and communities where "no one is left behind." The NUA also emphasizes peer-to-peer capacity development and partnerships.

Lessons from GWOPA's first years were fed into a subsequent 5-year Strategy for 2013–2017. The strategy had two strategic objectives: 1) Guiding the global growth of WOPs and 2) Strategic operational support to WOPs. Guiding global growth activities aimed at building the financial, political and technical support for WOPs at all levels worldwide and its activities included the development and knowledge and guidance, communications and advocacy, branding, and alliance building. The Strategic operational activities included supporting the regional WOP platforms, directly facilitating WOPs and attracting funds to the practice and related investment.

A 2018 evaluation of the past strategy concluded that WOPs are effective and GWOPA is instrumental in pushing their agenda. GWOPA has "succeeded in developing a normative framework that enables water and sanitation operators to improve service delivery with relatively limited funding and by applying a bottom-up process and contributed to mobilizing WOPs through its leveraging effects." Furthermore, WOPs have an important place in the current development context: "The opportunity for disseminating the WOP concept further remains substantial, which in turn will have significant positive effects on water and sanitation (and sewerage) service provision. The continuation of the GWOPA Secretariat's services remains important for addressing water and sanitation challenges globally."

## GWOPA Achievements

Since it began in 2009, GWOPA has built:

- **credibility for the WOPs partnership practice** which a recent EU evaluation describes as "highly appropriate and well adapted to the need for improving operational performance of water and sanitation utilities."
- a global WOPs movement, with **over 300 partnerships** on record and a worldwide network of WOP partners and practitioners. At least 320 million USD has been brought to the practice.
- a well-built **network of nearly 500 members and partners** including mostly utilities and utility associations, but also donors and civil society, different levels of government, private sector and unions.
- **a global infrastructure** of associated national and regional platforms facilitating WOPs on every continent, and active WOP programmes being implemented by most major regional development banks.
- a growing suite of over **30 normative products** that help these partnerships be done more effectively.



## Lessons Learned from the GWOPA 2013-2017 Strategic Period

The experience of implementing GWOPA's 2013-2017 strategy offered rich lessons for this next strategy period. Feedback was gathered from various angles and audiences: GWOPA's Mid-Term and Final 2013-2017 Strategy Evaluations, as well as informal and formal consultations with GWOPA's members, partners, International Steering Committee, and with UN-Habitat and GWOPA Secretariat staff. Some key recommendations that emerged for the next period were:

- Strengthen and make more explicit the links between the improvements generated by WOPs and global sustainability targets (such as those in SDGs and New Urban Agenda)
- Intensify collaboration with regional and national WOP platforms and major programmes
- Strengthen the environment for WOPs' scale up by advocating for enabling frameworks, laws and finance
- Bolster GWOPA's monitoring work to better capture different types of WOP impacts and to track global practice
- Retain focus of support on local and public utilities, without excluding community and rural service providers
- Lead global WOP knowledge, advocacy and convening functions to add value to the operational work of platforms and partners
- Fine-tune GWOPA's governance framework to ensure it supports engagement and effectiveness and minimizes risks
- Continue to build and engage with a diverse Alliance. Strengthen working relationships with financial institutions, knowledge centers, municipal governments and regulators.



## How GWOPA's work Supports the UN-Habitat 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

A new UN-Habitat strategy for the 2020-2025 period was adopted in November 2018 *"to advance sustainable urbanization as a driver of development and peace to improve living conditions for all."* The new strategy refocuses and strengthens the agency's work for greater impact, positioning it to deliver on new global development agreements, notably the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

Although UN-Habitat is not the only source for GWOPA's mandate and strategic direction, aligning better with UN-Habitat's emerging 2020-2025 strategy was an important consideration in the preparation of GWOPA's current strategy. By building strategic coherence, GWOPA will more clearly contribute to UN-Habitat's strategic outcomes, while benefitting from the networks, expertise and other synergies of being anchored within the UN Agency for sustainable urbanization.

How GWOPA aims to contribute to UN-Habitat domains of Change:



UN-Habitat Domain of Change	Outcome	Potential GWOPA Contributions
<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban - rural continuum</b></p>	<p>Increased and equal access to basic services, sustainable mobility, and public space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting and supporting WOPs that strengthen water and sanitation utilities' capacity and performance to: increase access and equity in service delivery, improve spatial connectivity and productivity, increase local resource mobilization and decent jobs, wisely apply relevant technology and innovations, reduce greenhouse gases, improve resource efficiency, protect ecological assets and develop climate-adapted infrastructure, enhance social inclusion and integration, participate in effective crisis response and recovery, and enhance their resilience.</li> <li>Generating and sharing knowledge (data, documentation, guidance, policies, best practices) to support operators in delivering on the same themes towards the identified outcomes.</li> <li>Delivering workshops, communication, advisory services and advocacy efforts to support operators on the same themes towards the identified outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions.</b></p>	<p>Improved spatial connectivity and productivity of cities and regions</p> <p>Increased and equitably distributed locally generated revenues</p> <p>Expanded deployment of frontier technologies and innovations for urban development</p>	
<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment</b></p>	<p>Reduced greenhouse emissions and improved air quality</p> <p>Improved resource efficiency and protection of ecological assets</p> <p>Effective adaptation of communities and infrastructure to climate change</p>	
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>Effective urban crises prevention and response</b></p>	<p>Enhanced social integration and inclusive communities</p> <p>Improved living standards and inclusion of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees through effective crisis response and recovery</p> <p>Enhanced resilience of the built environment and infrastructure</p>	



# GWOPA Strategy 2020-2025

## Vision

Water and sanitation service providers, connected in a solidarity-based network, are sharing and helping one another improve services for all, to achieve local and global objectives.

## Mission

To work as an effective global alliance to inspire, mobilize support for, catalyze, guide, monitor and enable Water Operators Partnerships that improve lives.

## Strategic Objectives

**1:** WOPs are scaled up.

**2:** WOPs are contributing to water and sanitation service providers' improved capacity and performance, and local realization of the SDGs, to the benefit of all, particularly the poor.

**GWOPA's Strategic Objective 1** is that WOPs are scaled up. By assembling the necessary conditions for WOPs: finance, support, knowledge and actors, Water Operators' Partnerships are expected to take place at a greater scale worldwide.

**GWOPA's Strategic Objective 2** is that WOPs are leading to water and sanitation service providers' improved capacity and performance, and local realization of the SDGs, to the benefit of all, particularly the poor. Well-executed WOPs are expected to lead to utility improvements of increasing scope: capacity developed in the short term progressively leads to organizational change, performance improvement and eventually wider sustainability objectives.

## Outcome Areas

### Enable WOPs

WOPs are wellknown, supported, adopted and adequately funded.

### Guide with Knowledge

WOP actors make use of the knowledge products and services produced or co-produced by GWOPA.

### Mobilize Alliance

GWOPA is a strong and fruitful water solidarity network.

Intermediate Outcomes

### Effectively Govern and Manage

GWOPA is efficiently and effectively operated and governed

Supporting Outcomes



## Intermediate Outcome 1: WOPs are well-known, widely supported and funded

Activity Area: Enabling WOPs

To achieve the desired scale-up of the WOPs practice, dedicated effort is needed to raise consciousness about the challenges facing water utilities and the opportunities for addressing them. The WOPs practice needs to become better known and trusted by the relevant technical, financial and political actors, as a cost-effective mechanism for achieving concrete local objectives, such as improving services for customers and financial sustainability, while contributing to the global and aspirational visions embraced by the Declaration on the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation and Agenda 2030. Governments, financiers and decision-makers must furthermore be encouraged to adopt or implement frameworks, policies and strategies that facilitate or enhance WOP practice.







## Communications

GWOPA's communications efforts will aim to increase awareness and appreciation of WOPs to a range of audiences, highlighting their contribution to capacity development, performance improvement and sustainable development. Messages will emphasise the demonstrated benefits of WOPs to people and institutions, focusing on their cost-effectiveness, leverage effects, and contribution to broad and lasting change. Advantages for mentor utilities and their communities, such as pride, solidarity and staff development, need also to be shared through stories and interviews. Communications activities will also aim to strengthen GWOPA's reputation as an open global water solidarity network comprised of partners engaged in helping water and sanitation utilities help one another.

GWOPA will use a range of communication media to obtain its communication objectives, considering reach, engagement and cost-effectiveness in its choices. In coordination with its regional platforms, GWOPA will participate strategically in international events where it can address priority audiences and can combine communication objectives with others. Online communications via GWOPA website, social media and regular newsletters will continue to be important means for reaching target audiences. GWOPA will collaborate with its regional platforms and alliance partners to expand the content of its communications and to extend the reach of its messages. Deepening engagement of users with content and GWOPA materials will be prioritized and the results of communication activities more carefully monitored.



## Advocacy

GWOPA will lobby to improve the political and legal context for utilities and solidarity-based peer-support partnerships by advocating for WOP - and utility-friendly positions within international, national and local policies, laws and frameworks.

Internationally, GWOPA can channel the voice of service providers within the United Nations System, advocating for actions and positions that support sustainable water and sanitation utilities and WOPs. GWOPA will be more active within UN-Water to communicate and collaborate with related UN agencies and programmes in supporting utilities to make their full contributions to the SDGs. GWOPA will align its efforts with UN-led political initiatives such as the International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028, the High Level Political Forum and the work of the UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation among others, to raise the international profile of water utilities as development actors in the pursuit of global sustainability goals and to ensure recognition and support within international frameworks

for utilities and WOPs. As WOPs are examples of South-South and decentralized cooperation, GWOPA will also strategically collaborate with UN and other initiatives working to promote and build knowledge in these growing forms of development cooperation.

National governments are instrumental in creating supportive environments for utility improvements and participation in WOPs. GWOPA will work with UN-Member states to raise their awareness about sound local water management and policies and encourage them to allocate sufficient national resources or decentralised fund-raising capacity to the local level for effective basic services and water management. Furthermore, GWOPA will encourage and guide national governments of both mentor and mentee utilities to back WOPs practice politically and financially.

GWOPA will actively enlist local governments, many of which have jurisdiction over water and sanitation at local level or which are service providers in their own right, as WOP enablers or practitioners. GWOPA will make use of UN-



Habitat's privileged relationships with local governments and its strong partnerships with global municipal network organizations to promote local policy and management that support utilities in delivering sustainable water and sanitation services.

Regulatory bodies that set and oversee compliance with standards on utilities such tariffs, performance and participation, are key enabling actors in any significant improvement process. Some regulators are already facilitating peer exchange, learning and benchmarking activities between operators at national level, and stand as natural allies to be further engaged in support of WOPs.

Uniquely positioned as a UN-Habitat-led programme guided by a global network of water actors, GWOPA will strengthen a role it has been playing for years, as broker between the urban and water sectors. GWOPA will continue to organize and participate in events at venues such as Stockholm World Water Week and the World Water and Urban Forums, to cross fertilize water and city perspectives, and to build dialogue and cooperation between political and technical aspects of water in cities, between urban planners, water engineers and social and environmental service providers, and across urban and water frameworks. GWOPA will work with partners to bridge actors to enable the elaboration of sound, mutually beneficially local water action in the public interest.



## **Strengthening Local Government Commitments for Water**

Water and sanitation services are a local matter, yet city and regional governments frequently lack the authority, funds, capacity or will to be their champions.

GWOPA, the World Water Council and key local government institutions, ICLEI and UCLG, have been leading efforts to mobilize municipal and regional government leadership and action for water at the global level. Since 2015, during the World Water Forums, the largest international water-related event, the partners have organized the Forum's Local and Regional Authorities (LRA) Conference, to gather mayors, governors, utility managers and local water leaders for political and technical exchanges about sound water management in cities and regions.

The LRA Conference discussions and declarations strengthen water-related policy, programmes and initiatives at the local and regional level, including raising local government awareness about the opportunities and benefits of WOPs.

## **Mobilizing WOP Finance**

GWOPA will work to expand the pool of funds available for the WOPs practice worldwide.

GWOPA will continue building recognition for Water Operators' Partnerships as a cost-effective model for strengthening utility capacity and performance. Evidence and examples are convincing, so GWOPA will continue to document and demonstrate WOPs' value for money, considering not only immediate revenue gains but also long-term sustainability benefits. As financial data on WOPs is often poorly tracked, GWOPA will dedicate additional research efforts to better understand the long-term costs and benefits of WOPs. Stronger WOPs financial tracking will be introduced at the level of individual WOPs, as well by tracking sources of WOPs funding worldwide directly from funders. GWOPA will generate academic articles and briefs substantiating WOPs contributions to improved performance, financial standing and the SDGs.



GWOPA will engage with existing WOP donors and development banks, to strengthen their commitment to funding WOPs as a systematic component of their development cooperation programmes. GWOPA will seek their buy-in to commit to WOPs of greater duration, connected with investment, and which follow global good practice. GWOPA will offer guidance on funding successful WOPs. The Monitoring tools GWOPA is putting in place will be essential to backing these commitments.

To diversify the sources of funding for WOPs and utility investments connected with WOPs, GWOPA will also work through targeted advocacy efforts to engage new donors: banks (public and private, domestic and international), as well as different levels of government and utilities themselves. Working with partners, GWOPA will harness new fund sources such as green and water bonds, and climate mitigation and adaptation funds where suitable for WOPs and related water utility improvements.

### **WOPs' Ripple Effect**

Utilities that have significantly improved with the help of WOP mentors often become mentors in their own right, supporting other utilities within their country or region to improve.

After making major improvements with the support of various European utilities, ONEE in Morocco has become an important mentor in the South, sharing its acquired competencies throughout the Arab States and Africa in a virtuous chain reaction. California's Contra Costa is mentoring Belize Water and Sewerage Authority (BWSA) in the intention of making it a mentor of its own right in the Caribbean. Similar patterns can be seen around the globe.





GWOPA will join hands in efforts to introduce decentralized cooperation policies and laws (such as “1%” water laws existing in France and the Netherlands) within national and regional legislation or, where they already exist, encourage their application to WOPs. As many WOPs are a form of south-south cooperation, GWOPA will seek available opportunities to make use of related applicable funding sources.

Beyond efforts to increase the overall global allocation of funds to the WOPs practice, GWOPA will mobilize project funding to implement multi-partner WOP initiatives to which GWOPA would complement operational work with services such as advocacy, dissemination, knowledge management, monitoring or facilitation support. GWOPA will work with regional and national platforms, and emerging WOP programmes to jointly raise funds for joint project implementation.

GWOPA will continue to develop and promote WOP models which associate WOPs with investment where they are needed to realize the full impact of WOP benefits. GWOPA will encourage financial institutions to make use of WOPs to prepare for, accompany or follow up on hardware investments.

## **Upscaled WOPs for Sustainability**

**WaterWorX, an initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS), was the first major WOPs program explicitly planned to help achieve the SDGs. Running from 2017 - 2030 and bringing together 10 Dutch water utilities with their local partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America to provide 10 million people with sustainable access to clean drinking water, it is also the most ambitious global WOP initiative led by a single country to date.**

**GWOPA is supporting this initiative with knowledge and advocacy. A shared ambition of DGIS and GWOPA is to see such programmes replicated around the world.**

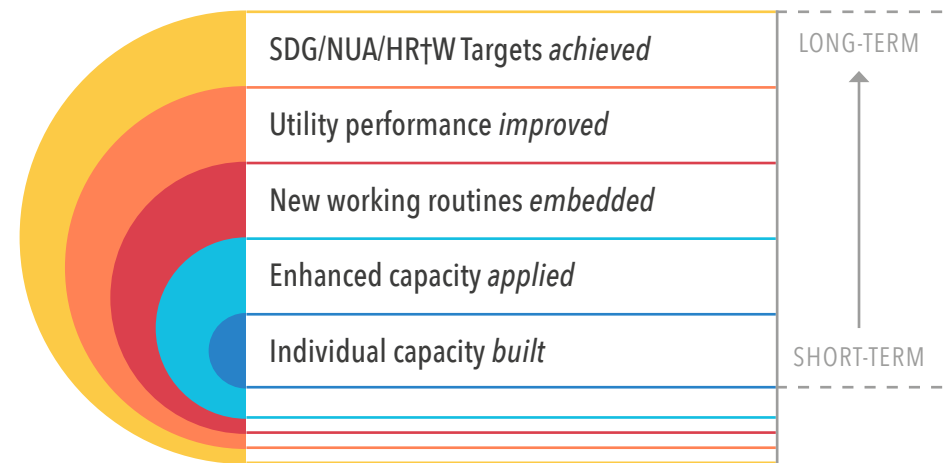
# Intermediate Outcome 2: WOP actors make use of the knowledge products and services produced or co-produced by GWOPA

GWOPA Activity Area: Knowledge and Guidance

## WOPs Documentation and Research

GWOPA will continue to collaborate in the production of research and case studies about Water Operators' Partnerships. Individual WOPs Case Studies will be prepared applying a refined Analytical Framework for this purpose. Further WOPs will be documented as part of GWOPA's knowledge contribution to given programmes, such as WaterWorX, or because of their research value based on novelty in the challenges they tackle, innovations in their WOP approach or interesting results they generate. GWOPA will also undertake studies on WOP partnership approaches, as well as surveys of the financial, legal and political environment for utilities and WOPs.

Progressive WOPs results



With increased duration and scope, WOPs results expand from simple capacity building, to operational changes, to performance improvements that make contributions to global development frameworks. GWOPA will aim to monitor these various levels of results.



## WOPs Monitoring

GWOPA will lead the global monitoring, documentation and analysis of the WOPs practice.

GWOPA will continue to develop its global WOP Profile database to track information about where and how WOPs are happening, and will roll out its new WOP Results Monitoring and Reporting methodology at the WOP project level to support the collection of more comprehensive and robust information about results. The WOP Results Monitoring and Reporting methodology will allow GWOPA to document WOPs impacts at different levels, from capacity to performance enhancements and contributions to global development frameworks. The tool will help individual WOPs track positive organizational changes that occur before standard Key Performance Indicator improvements can be reported, supporting greater accountability and traceability in the WOPs process, and enabling adaptations for relevancy and efficiency.

GWOPA will engage its network of WOPs platforms and WOP implementing partners to apply the monitoring and reporting methodology in their WOP programmes and

to reflect the data they generate in the Global WOPs profile database. GWOPA will provide technical support and training in the use of the tool and ensure that the experience of users is reflected in its regular updating.

## Knowledge and Tools for Effective WOPs

GWOPA will continue to produce and disseminate WOP guidance based on WOPs principles and good practice drawn from documented cases. Existing guidelines and tools to facilitate the establishment, implementation and monitoring of effective and inclusive partnerships will be further improved and shared widely in different formats and languages. Through virtual and physical training events, GWOPA will build the capacity of its network of regional and national WOPs platforms and major WOP Programme partners to apply practice guidance and tools in their facilitation of WOPs.

GWOPA will support WOPs to align with the SDGs and relevant development frameworks. By documenting inspiring examples, and developing and sharing guidance and tools, GWOPA will help WOP programmes, platforms and other practitioners to plan, implement,

monitor and communicate about WOPs coherently with the Agenda 2030 objectives. GWOPA could take the lead in developing guidelines to help operators navigate SDGs, including implementation modalities to guide Operators actions in achieving them. More directly, GWOPA will also develop guidelines to help operators to navigate global commitments, including implementation modalities for achieving the SDGs or realizing the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation. As with all its knowledge materials, GWOPA will collaborate with expert partners, platforms and programmes within its network in developing, testing and disseminating.

GWOPA will enable greater direct knowledge sharing between members of the Alliance through an online collaborative platform. The platform will allow utility staff to connect to professional peers with whom they share interests, skills and knowledge through online Communities of Practice. These tools will be made available in collaboration with GWOPA's network of platforms and programmes.

## What do Utilities have to do with the Sustainable Development Goals?

- **Non-state actors like water utilities are key to realizing the SDGs.** Many believe they are the business of governments, but the SDGs can only be achieved with everyone's involvement - all types of actors at all levels. Water and sanitation service providers are on the frontlines of some of the most important sustainability challenges and are essential in the effort to localize the SDGs.

- **Utilities doing WOPs are already contributing directly to SDG 6.** Improving water quality, affordability and continuity all support SDG 6.1. Better wastewater reuse and treatment helps meet SDG 6.3, and by reducing water losses, utilities are increasing water-use efficiency in support of SDG 6.4. WOP activities related to sanitation, basin management or watershed conservation may also contribute to SDG targets 6.2, 6.5 and 6.6. Still, utilities need to better understand the relevance of the SDGs to their own operations and more actively embrace them in their WOPs.

- **Operators that have not been embracing sustainability need to do so urgently.** Many of the challenges that utilities face today - from crumbling infrastructure to water shortages - are the result of unsustainable decisions made in the past. For many utilities, sustainability is no longer an abstract concept or future concern but a concrete and imminent question of survival.

- **The SDGs are an opportunity.** The SDGs offer operators a common language for establishing shared vision with governments, regulators and communities. The SDG framework may create funding opportunities or inspire the political will to take on improvement processes. The SDGs' integrated nature can open the door to new collaborations or operational models that had not previously been possible. The SDGs may also help raise awareness and appreciation among the general public about the value of public water services and their providers.

In this strategy period, GWOPA will push for sustainability objectives to be explicitly addressed in Water Operators' Partnerships, and will support service providers to do so in WOP conceptualization, planning, implementation and monitoring.





## Small Investments, Big Returns

Ensuring universal access to sustainable water and sanitation services is not just about capacity; it is widely understood as a financial challenge. The World Bank estimates that 114 billion USD will be needed annually until 2030, just to meet SDG 6.1 and 6.2.

Capacity and finance are tightly-linked and mutually-supporting considerations in extending sustainable water and sanitation services to all, since capacitated utilities are better able to sustainably manage their own finances and secure and utilize investment finance. Conversely, infrastructure investments accompanied by strong capacity development are more impactful and sustainable. Essentially, a little investment in capacity makes precious money go a lot further.

WOPs embrace these connections and try to make the most of them. WOPs help improve public utilities' financial sustainability and access to needed investment in various ways, including by:

- **optimizing the use of existing utility revenues** by boosting performance efficiency, introducing cost-effective innovation or transparent financial management systems





- **growing utility revenues** by improving billing and revenue collection, or expanding a utilities' services or customer base (especially among the urban poor who otherwise often pay more for informal services of lesser quality)

- ensuring the effective and **sustainable use of new investments** by developing mentee utility staff's technical, managerial and financial capacity to soundly manage

- **producing bankable projects** or performance improvement plans ready for financing, as part of a WOP improvement process

- helping **improve utility credit-ratings** and increasing the confidence of needed investors and

- **influencing regulators and governments** to provide the support needed to ensure utilities' financial sustainability and pursue universal access goals

As traditional grant-based development aid makes up an ever-smaller fraction of needed development finance, WOPs, in keeping with key recommendations of the Addis Ababa report on Financing for Development, help leverage small investment (in capacity development) to mobilize bigger finance for the achievement of the SDGs. In the 2020-2025 Strategy period, GWOPA will continue to demonstrate and raise awareness about this catalytic effect of WOPs.

## Helping Utilities Tackle Big New Challenges with WOPs

**Climate Change** is happening now, and many service providers are not prepared. Utilities can no longer count on the same quantity, quality and timing of source water to ensure continued, reliable service delivery. Related drought, flooding, storms, and heat can damage key infrastructure and cause cuts to service. Utilities, as significant local sources of GHG emissions, need also to mitigate climate change with energy efficiency, reuse, and low carbon planning measures. WOPs are helping utilities cut energy costs and emissions, assess climate change vulnerability and develop adaptation plans, including implementing measures to save water or procure alternative sources.

**Scarcity and Pollution** are inter-related concerns that aggravate utilities' challenge of sourcing water for their essential services. Untreated wastewater lowers water quality and effectively

reduces availability. Scarcity inevitably increases the cost of water service provision, making it more difficult for service providers to meet both financial and human rights imperatives. WOPs are helping utilities to reduce losses and increase water use efficiency, treat and reuse wastewater, protect ecosystems and utilize green infrastructure. WOPs can support utilities to adopt or 'leap frog' towards circular systems that can help them address both water quality and quantity challenges.

**Urbanization** presents an opportunity for the more equitable, efficient and environmentally sound delivery of basic services, yet in many cities, slums are growing faster than formal water and sanitation service networks are being extended. The unserved inevitably find some basic service solution, though usually at a higher price - to the environment and to the health or

pocketbook. WOPs can help utilities be able to anticipate and finance service extension or, where network extension is unviable, explore connections with decentralized or non-piped technologies and informal and community providers.

**Disaster and Displacement** Armed conflict and environmental crises are uprooting people and leaving many without access to safe water and sanitation services, often where service provision capacity is already weak. Utilities need help to resist, recover and build back from disaster, or to provide displaced people with the services they require to assure their health. WOPs have been helping service providers put in place emergency action plans, early warning systems, water safety and adaptation plans, and to deliver robust and inclusive services in places affected by disaster.



## Intermediate Outcome 3: GWOPA is a strong and fruitful water solidarity network

GWOPA Activity Area: Alliance Mobilization

GWOPA will carry out its mission as a strong network of actively engaged and coordinated members, partners and platforms, with a robust governance framework. As GWOPA moves away from direct WOP implementation, it will raise its status as a convener, coordinator and catalyzer for the WOPs' practice.

### Growing Membership

GWOPA will work with its regional and national platforms to consolidate and further expand the global membership of organizations who can participate in, benefit from, or contribute to WOPs. Efforts will focus on engaging public utilities, of all sizes, in both urban and rural areas and from all regions, to share knowledge and engage in WOPs as mentors and mentees. For reach and perspective, GWOPA will also continue to nurture diversity within its membership which currently includes civil society organizations, development partners, labour unions and private utilities and which spans every continent.

### Leveraging Partnerships

The GWOPA Secretariat will make the most of its Alliance approach by collaborating with organizations to achieve its strategic objectives. It will seek expertise within its network, or reach out to relevant new organizations to bring in knowledge and assets it may lack. Partnership will be used to help accomplish all aspects of GWOPA's strategy.

### WOP Platforms and Programmes

The global network of national and regional platforms, as well as the emerging number of independent WOP programmes, are the operational arm of the GWOPA Strategy. Close, mutually beneficial and active collaboration with these various programmes underlies GWOPA's strategic approach.

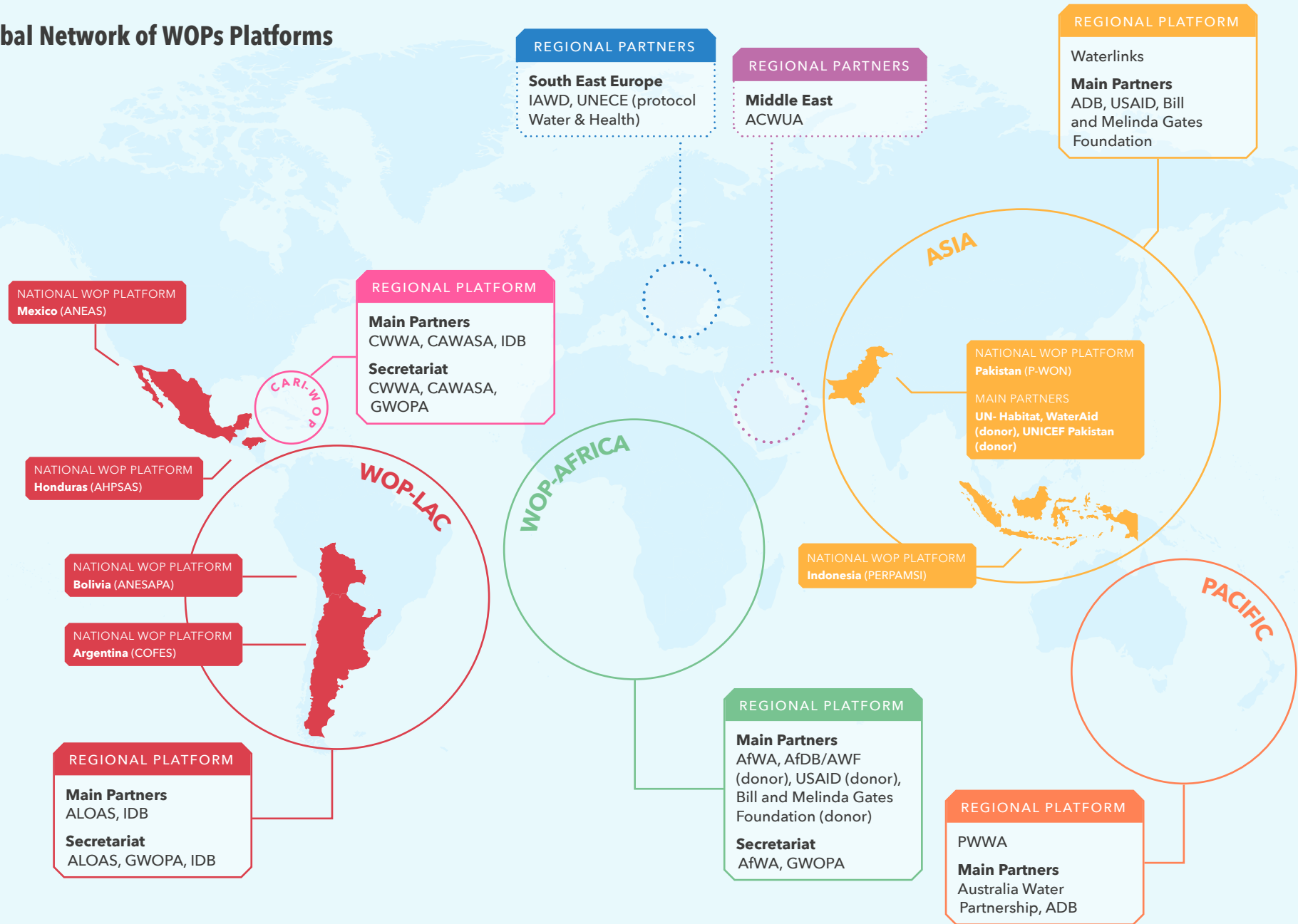








# Global Network of WOPs Platforms



In the new strategy period, GWOPA will continue to strengthen regional and national WOP platforms in its network, as needed. GWOPA will continue to formalize relationships with platforms through Memoranda of Understanding that lay out mutually beneficial relationships in which GWOPA provides normative backing to their WOP facilitation work. GWOPA will set operating standards for regional and national platforms with which it is associating, promoting adherence to WOP principles and good management practices, and requiring regular information sharing as a minimum. In support of the platforms, GWOPA will lead global advocacy and communications for WOPs, develop knowledge and guidance, provide a global exchange platform and support international WOP brokering. Together, GWOPA and its platforms will jointly raise funds for WOP implementation and collaborate on other activities that advance the objectives of both the platforms and GWOPA. Where there is need, demand and a viable host institution, GWOPA will support the establishment of new platforms at sub-regional or country level.

## **WOP Programmes**

GWOPA will also seek to add value in all major self-standing WOP programmes, establishing a knowledge or advocacy role in initiatives such as WaterWorX. GWOPA will work with partners to develop and help implement other similar projects that help bring WOPs to scale.

Within the UN system, GWOPA will collaborate with its sister UN organizations through UN-Water's coordinating function. Within UN-Habitat, GWOPA will seek stronger synergies with related projects and branches, drawing on the agency's rich urban expertise and strong connections with local government.





## Thematic Hubs

GWOPA will aim to capitalize on the knowledge, networks and strengths within its Alliance to increase the pace with which utilities are tackling sustainability challenges. Focusing on a select number of key areas at the utility-sustainability nexus where utilities as a whole urgently need to advance (precise pillars to be determined, see box for potential focus) GWOPA will bring together expert partners and WOPs practitioners within its network to rally relevant knowledge, financing and advocacy efforts to support operators in making more rapid improvement in these areas.

Each thematic hub would operate in function of its resources, needs and ambitions of its members, but may involve:

- Convening Expert Group Meetings at WOPs Congresses and other major events
- Consolidating existing knowledge and developing new guidance to address identified gaps
- Showcasing exemplary utility practice and innovation
- Developing and delivering training
- Fostering new WOPs focusing on themes
- Leading advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns

Potential Thematic Hubs	Issues and Concepts to be addressed
Regenerative Urban Waters	IUWM, water-sensitive urban design, energy water food nexus, circular economy, carbon neutrality
Inclusive Services	Pro-poor initiatives, decentralized and no-piped systems, connecting with informal and community operators, inclusive and responsive tariffs, gender mainstreaming.
Governance	Transparency, accountability, participation; multi-level governance; working with regulators and local governments.
Resilient Service Providers	Ecosystem services, water safety planning, watershed protection, climate change adaptation, emergency response planning.
Technology for the SDGs	Big data, disruptive technologies and business models, decentralized networks, cyber-security.

# Supporting Outcome 1: GWOPA is efficiently and effectively operated and governed

GWOPA Activity Area :

Effectively govern and manage the Alliance

## Governance

GWOPA's Governance structure and management is defined by the GWOPA Charter, established at its first Steering Committee in 2009 to set the regulatory framework for GWOPA governance and operations. Updated once in 2013, the Charter will undergo another participatory review and amendment early in the new 2020-2025 strategy period, with an eye to fine-tuning for effectiveness, while retaining its foundational principles. As of December 2018, GWOPA governance is structured as follows:

## General Assembly

**Members** GWOPA Members participate in GWOPA's General Assemblies and are eligible to run and vote in International Steering Committee elections. Membership in the Alliance is open to all interested water and sanitation stakeholder organizations and obtained by committing to adhere to GWOPA's principles and code-of-conduct in the implementation of partnership activities.

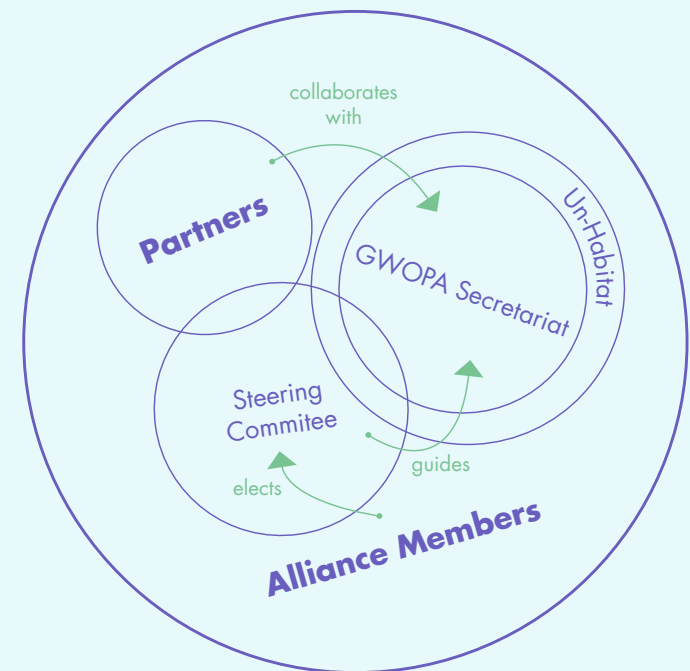
**Partners** GWOPA partners are the substantive partners formally engaged with the GWOPA Secretariat in implementing activities. In the new strategy period, criteria and processes for membership and partnership will be streamlined and better communicated to expand membership and increase the quality and quantity of its substantive partnerships.

**International Steering Committee** GWOPA's International Steering Committee (ISC) reviews reports and workplans and provides advice and overall strategic guidance to GWOPA. GWOPA's current ISC is comprised of a fixed number of representatives from each stakeholder category: public water operators or associations representing different regions, development partners, civil society organizations, labour unions and private operators. The composition of the Steering Committee reflects the geographical and institutional diversity of the Alliance as established in GWOPA's charter. The term of the Steering Committee membership is 4 years. Half of its membership is turned over through elections every two years at GWOPA General Assemblies.

**UN-Habitat** UN-Habitat Executive Director serves as GWOPA International Steering Committee Chair. GWOPA will support the implementation of UN-Habitat's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan and continue to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda by supporting Local Authorities and Member states *"to equip public water and sanitation utilities with the capacity to implement sustainable water management systems, including sustainable maintenance of urban infrastructure services, through capacity development"* (Paragraph 120 of the New Urban Agenda).

## Secretariat

The GWOPA Secretariat is institutionally anchored within UN-Habitat, currently as unit within the Urban Basic Services Branch. The Secretariat will be responsible for implementing the GWOPA Strategy in collaboration with Alliance Partners and Members and in consultation with UN-Habitat and the International Steering Committee. The Secretariat is currently based in Barcelona, following a 2013 agreement with the Government of Spain and the City of Barcelona.





The Secretariat Team will be led by a Programme Manager, with three to four professional staff and one administrative staff member. During the strategy implementation period, the Secretariat will count on the additional support of UN-Habitat staff in Headquarters, consultants, Junior Professional Officers and interns, as well as the ad-hoc support of UN volunteers. The tasks of the core staff include normative work for UN-Habitat as well as the operational implementation of activities under the focus areas identified in this strategy.

## Resources

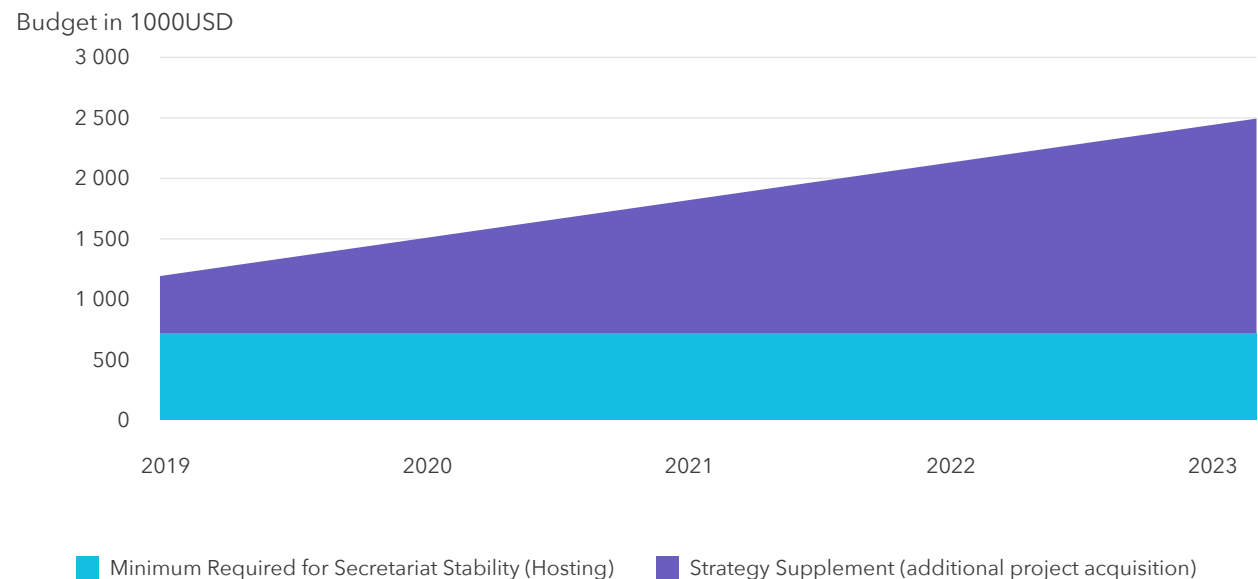
Funding for the implementation of the strategy will be secured through a combination of a hosting agreement and acquired projects.

The contribution of the Host country to the implementation of the 5-year Strategy will cover basic Secretariat costs to ensure the stability of the programme. These fixed costs have been stipulated at 700,000 USD per annum.

Above that, the ambition is to grow the total annual budget of GWOPA to an optimum level of 2-2.5 million per annum. The projected evolution of Budget shows how GWOPA will move from current levels of funding for basic strategy implementation to an expanded and diversified portfolio for a more intense implementation of the strategy.

A resource mobilization plan for ensuring GWOPA has adequate funds for the strategy period will be developed as a priority. During the 2020-2025 period, GWOPA will work to mobilize additional multilateral and bilateral donors by making use of Trust Fund mechanisms within UN-Habitat that would allow its various donors to contribute both earmarked (thematically or geographically) and non-earmarked funds for WOP-related activities.

### Projected Evolution of Budget for GWOPA Strategy Implementation



## Results Framework

Normative guidance for monitoring indicators and baselines will be established during the course of 2019. Targets will be established annually. This monitoring framework shall guide GWOPA's reporting. The framework will be revisited and adjusted as needed during GWOPA ISC meetings.

Code*	Outcome / Indicator	Means of Verification
<b>SO1</b>	<b>WOPs are scaled up</b>	
PI 1	No. of new WOPs per year	WOP monitoring report and/or evaluations, data facilitated by WOP platforms and programs, information gathered through our Results PMR tool, annual survey
PI 2	Proportion of new WOPs per year explicitly addressing SDGs and/or the HRtWS.	WOP monitoring report and/or evaluations, data facilitated by WOP platforms and programs, information gathered through our Results PMR tool, annual survey
<b>SO2</b>	<b>WOPs are contributing to water and sanitation service providers' improved capacity and performance, and progressive local realization of the SDGs, to the benefit of all, particularly the poor</b>	
PI 3	No. of mentee utility staff having improved their capacity through a WOP per year	WOP monitoring reports and/or evaluations, data facilitated by WOP platforms and programs, information gathered through our Results PMR tool, annual survey
PI 4	No. of WOP mentee utilities having improved their performance per year	WOP monitoring report and/or evaluations, data facilitated by WOP platforms and programs, information gathered through our Results PMR tool, annual survey
PI 5	Proportion of WOPs with results contributing to SDG targets and/or HRtWS criteria per year	Analysis of WOPs reports

Code*	Outcome / Indicator	Means of Verification
PI 6	Number of end users that the mentee water operator engaged in a WOP serves.	WOP monitoring report and/or evaluations, data facilitated by WOP platforms and programs, information gathered through our Results PMR tool, annual survey
<b>IO1</b>	<b>WOP actors make use of the knowledge products and services produced or co-produced by GWOPA</b>	
PI 7	Reach of knowledge products per year	Web statistics and GWOPA records on distributed knowledge products
PI 8	Reach of knowledge services per year	GWOPA records and list of attendance to sessions
PI 9	Degree of satisfaction with knowledge products (average per year)	Web and social networks statistics, survey
PI 10	Degree of satisfaction with knowledge services (average per year)	Feedback survey from participants
PI 11	No. of visits to the Global WOPs Observatory per year	Web statistics
<b>IO2</b>	<b>WOPs are well-known, widely supported and funded</b>	
PI 12	Reach of GWOPA (co-)organized events dedicated to lobby, advocacy and resource mobilisation per year	GWOPA records and list of attendance to sessions
PI 13	No. of GWOPA (co-)authored advocacy documents (papers, articles, reports) used for the promotion of WOPs per year	Frameworks, policies, laws
PI 14	No. of actors initiating work towards promoting, supporting or advocating for WOPs per year	GWOPA records



Code*	Outcome / Indicator	Means of Verification
PI 15	No of new international, national or local frameworks, policies, laws, or mechanisms that supports WOPs-type work (non-for-profit peer partnerships for capacity development in the water sector) per year	The papers, articles and reports and GWOPA annual reports informing about their use
PI 16	Total amount of new funds dedicated to the WOPs practice per year	Source organization reports, published call for proposals, surveys, WOP Observatory data
PI 17	Total value (in-kind or cash) of support to WOPs per year from mentors and mentees	WOP monitoring report and/or evaluations, data facilitated by WOP platforms and programs, information gathered through our Results PMR tool, annual survey
PI 18	Total value of investments in water utilities that are explicitly associated with WOPs	WOP monitoring report and/or evaluations, data facilitated by WOP platforms and programs, information gathered through our Results PMR tool, annual survey
PI 19	Reach of the Global WOPs Congress (by type of audience) per Congress	GWOPA records on participants that subscribed and participated
PI 20	Web and social network engagement per year	Statistics in the web and social media on likes, follows, etc.
PI 21	No. of organizations joining the WOP community per year	Mailing list
<b>SpO1</b>	<b>GWOPA is a strong and fruitful water solidarity network</b>	
PI 22	No. of GWOPA members	Alliance membership database
PI 23	No. of active GWOPA partners	Project documents, funding agreements or contracts
PI 24	Economic value of projects jointly implemented or supported with WOP platforms / programmes per year	Project documents, funding agreements or contracts

Code*	Outcome / Indicator	Means of Verification
SpO2	<b>GWOPA is efficiently and effectively operated and governed by the secretariat, UN HABITAT and Steering Committee</b>	
PI25	Funds managed by GWOPA per year	UN-Habitat financial statements
PI26	% of workplan achieved	GWOPA annual reports
PI27	Degree of satisfaction with the GWOPA governance structure for the effective stewardship of the Alliance.	Annual joint review by Steering Committee, UN-Habitat and GWOPA Secretariat

\* Strategic Outcomes (SO), Intermediate Outcomes (IO), Supporting Outcomes (SpO) and Performance Indicators (PIs)

## Key Assumptions, Risks and Mitigation Measures

The risk management framework will be regularly reviewed by GWOPA's Steering Committee, Secretariat and UN-Habitat as a tool for perceiving and responding pro-actively to emerging risks. The framework will be updated annually.

Activity Area	Key Assumptions	Risks	Probability of occurrence	Potential impact	Mitigation measures
Area: Enabling WOPs	<b>WOPs are well-known, widely supported and funded</b>	Low interest of key actors and obstacles in the institutional frameworks to allow and promote the use of funds for WOPs.	Medium	High	GWOPA to create and institutionalize a WOP lobby movement with key strategic actors.
		IFIs or donors fail to allocate sufficient funds for WOPs	Medium	High	GWOPA to generate further evidence of WOPs cost-effective contribution to improved capacity and performance, the SDGs, and the sustainability of investments. GWOPA to package its work to align with donor approaches and priorities.
Area: Knowledge and Guidance	<b>WOP actors make use of the knowledge products and services produced or co-produced by GWOPA</b>	The products and services are not applied or used.	Medium	Medium	GWOPA will continue to assess and respond to demand from its audiences, and will invest in outreach and dissemination for new products and services.
Area: Mobilizing the Alliance	<b>GWOPA is a strong and fruitful water solidarity network</b>	Low willingness of relevant organizations to enter into partnership with GWOPA.	Low	Medium	Seek out win-win scenarios for collaboration with key partners.
		Lack of collaboration of WOP platforms and Programms with GWOPA.	Low	Medium	Implement and monitor win-win collaboration agreements with each WOP platform and Programs.



Activity Area	Key Assumptions	Risks	Probability of occurrence	Potential impact	Mitigation measures
Area: Effective Governance and Management	<b>GWOPA is efficiently and effectively operated and governed by the Secretariat, UN-HABITAT and International Steering Committee</b>	Lack of secure host country and/or sufficient financial resources compromise GWOPA's ability to effectively deliver.	Medium / High	High	Diversify donor base and pool funds to reduce risk and increase attractiveness .  Develop internal provisions for loans for contingencies.
		GWOPA's Host Institution (UN-Habitat) fails to provide adequate administrative and institutional support to GWOPA to operate in an effective and efficient manner.	Low	High	GWOPA's International Steering Committee maintains regular and constructive communication with UN-Habitat's Executive Director to address any challenges that may arise.
		GWOPA's governance structure fails to support the Alliance activity.	Low	Medium	The ISC adequately represents the alliance membership and is equipped with the necessary tools and information to make recommendations to guide GWOPA. good elections. charter. transparent and participatory approach to revision of the charter.

The risk inventory and prevention/mitigation assumes that a new hosting agreement has been established for the implementation of GWOPA Strategy 2020-2025.







**GWOPA**  
Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance



UN-HABITAT

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